phrases. When it is said that virtue is agreement with the eternal fitness of things, or that it is benevolence, or utility, or beneficial tendency, all such definitions are erroneous. When it is said that virtue is that which is good., right, meritorious, obligatory, all such explanations amount to this, that virtue is virtue.

Man must content himself, we suspect—at least we mean in this treatise to satisfy ourselves—with answering a much lower question,—lower in speculation, though vastly superior in practical importance. What qualities must be found in all truly good actions on the part of man ?

Whatever these qualities be, they must be in the virtuous agent. What is a virtuous agent, but an agent acting virtuously; it is a virtuous state of the mind. This proposition, frequently overlooked, needs only to be announced to command universal assent.

By keeping this principle steadily before us, we shall be saved from a number of erroneous theories. It will at once shew that it is wrong to represent virtue, with Hume, as consisting in the useful and agreeable ; or as the advocates of this theory, somewhat modified, now place it, in beneficial tendency, or the greatest happiness principle. If the supporters of this ethical system, had so stated it, as to represent the intent to produce utility, or the purpose to do a beneficial act, as constituting virtuous action, their views would not have been inconsistent with the proposition now laid down. But they are careful to inform us, that the parties who perform the virtuous act may not be aware, or distinctly conscious, of its tendency. Love to God, they tell us, is beneficial; but they acknowledge that the person who loves God is not led to do so by a perception of the benefit to be derived. The utility or beneficial tendency of actions may be observed, they say, by careful reflection, but is not necessarily before the mind of the agent.

They farther allow, in regard to the great mass of mankind, that they are not in circumstances to determine the ultimate tendency of actions; that if they waited till they knew precisely all the effects of their conduct, they would never act; and that, if they acted on their own narrow short-sighted views of utility, they might perform the most atrocious crimes in the name of virtue. The advocates of the theory are constrained, in order to obviate these